



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Ambassador Pavel Vacek, Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 25, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We would like to welcome you, Mr. Ambassador, back to the Permanent Council and thank you very much for your report.

Like Ambassador Vacek, we welcome the recent progress Albania has made in combating corruption and organized crime, including the arrest of several drug smuggling suspects. As noted in the report of the Presence, Albania also is working through the Millennium Challenge Corporation Threshold Program to tackle corruption in public administration.

We note that the work of the Presence this year centers around electoral reform, assistance in judicial and property reform, capacity building of the Albanian Assembly, and support to the border police. We fully support these priorities.

We also note that in the months to come, the Presence is planning to continue its focus on these priorities, as well as to continue to support the implementation of Albania's national anti-trafficking Action Plan, improve further voters lists and registration procedures, and focus on the rights of the Roma community.

We continue to support the work of the field stations - or, if they are renamed, project offices. Members of our delegation have seen first hand the fine work being done in these offices, and the close ties with local government and officials which make OSCE activities even more effective.

We are pleased to hear that the Presence and the Government of Albania have been consulting constructively on the work and priorities of the Presence.

I would like to welcome the interest Albania has shown in announcing its bid to hold the Chairmanship of this Organization in 2012. While we have a lot of time before the decision will be taken, we look forward to discussing the possibility; it is a clear demonstration that Albania values the work of the OSCE.

And finally, with overall regard to the work of the Presence: prioritize, prioritize, prioritize, focus, focus, focus.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.